



# GLOBAL DIASPORA FORUM | *where ideas meet action*

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## THE GLOBAL DIASPORA FORUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- *Diasporas and the Global Context*
- *The Global Diaspora Forum*
- *The International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA)*
- *The U.S. Government and Diaspora Communities*

### **1. What does IdEA mean by “diaspora”?**

Diaspora means “to scatter” in Greek, but today we use the term to describe a community of people who live outside their shared country of origin or ancestry but maintain active connections with it. A diaspora includes both emigrants and their descendants. While some people lose their attachment to their ancestral homeland, others maintain a strong connection to a place that their ancestors may have left generations ago.

### **2. What does the global diaspora community look like?**

There are over 215 million people living in the world now in a country other than the one they were born in. This is larger than the population of Brazil, and almost triples what the number of global migrants was in 1990. People move for different reasons—economic opportunity, security, and family—to different places. But despite these differences, many maintain close connections in their countries of origins. According to the World Bank, remittances to developing countries reached \$381 billion in 2011, an amount that is expected to continue to rise at a 7-8% rate over the next several years.

## ***Global Diaspora Forum***

### **3. What is the Global Diaspora Forum?**

The Global Diaspora Forum is an annual celebration of the potential of diaspora communities in development and diplomacy. The gathering challenges diaspora communities to create new partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and public institutions in order to make their engagements with their countries of origin more effective, scalable, and sustainable. The Forum brings together a diverse range of stakeholders, all passionate about promoting diaspora engagement, including leaders of diaspora communities, government officials,

private sector leaders, international institutions, foundation executives, academic experts and members of nonprofit organizations.

#### **4. What is the goal of the Forum?**

The goal of the Forum is to bring together diaspora leaders from around the world and acknowledge the tremendous work these communities are doing in their countries of origin or heritage, to facilitate learning among these communities, and to forge partnerships with government agencies and the private sector.

#### **5. What can be expected of this year's Forum?**

The 2013 Global Diaspora Forum marks the third year of the event. For the first time, IdEA will partner with organizations around the world to bring the message of diaspora engagement to a truly global audience. Partner organizations will host diaspora events in Dublin, Ireland and Silicon Valley alongside IdEA's Global Diaspora Forum in Washington, DC. The Forum will kick-off with a special event in Los Angeles, CA. Technology will enable participants regardless of location to connect with the innovations and ideas being discussed at the other locations. The theme for the 2013 Global Diaspora Forum is "Where Ideas Meet Action." The Forum will feature inspiring stories from prominent figures in American popular culture, demonstrate exemplary initiatives in international development and diplomacy undertaken by diasporans of all generations, and showcase methods of cultural bridge-building that encourage young diasporans to connect with their countries of heritage.

### ***The International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA)***

#### **6. What is IdEA?**

The International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA) seeks to deepen engagement and partnership with diaspora communities. In 2011, the Department of State launched IdEA as the primary platform for promoting partnerships between diasporas and a diverse set of private and public institutions to enhance sustainable development and diplomacy outcomes in countries of origin in the developing world. IdEA's partners are working with diaspora community members to foster entrepreneurship, diplomacy, volunteerism, philanthropy, and innovation in countries of heritage.

#### **7. Who are IdEA's partners?**

Partners include the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Western Union, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the InterAmerican Development Bank, Digicel, the HAND Foundation, GlobalGiving, MentorCloud, m-Via, and One Vietnam. Together, they have committed resources and in-kind services to launch concrete projects as part of the International diaspora

Engagement Alliance (IdEA). Our partners also challenge the broader global diaspora community to scale their engagement efforts in countries of origin.

### ***The U.S. Government and Diaspora Communities***

#### **8. Why does the U.S. government work with diaspora communities?**

U.S. government work with diaspora communities is a high priority. Currently, more than 62 million people in U.S. communities are first or second generation diasporans and many of them maintain close ties to countries with critical development needs. Diaspora communities are uniquely positioned to engage in development and diplomacy due to their language and cultural familiarity, unique level of risk tolerance, personal and professional networks, and motivation to improve living standards and promote growth in their countries of origin. Furthermore, diaspora-led engagement is of tremendous importance because diaspora communities can—and do—help us meet 21st century global challenges including clean energy development, food security, efficient and effective governance, job growth and economic stability.

#### **9. What is the role of diaspora communities in advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives?**

Diaspora communities have the potential to serve as a powerful people-to-people asset for the United States in our global foreign relations. With their cultural familiarity, motivation, unique skills and leadership they are incredibly powerful—functioning like our Peace Corps, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the U.S. Department of State all rolled into one. Diaspora communities send remittance checks to loved ones in their countries of origin, respond first to disasters and crises in their communities of origin, speak out in favor of good governance and invest in opportunities back home that others might consider too risky. These communities step up to volunteer, provide healthcare, build schools and create businesses in their countries of origin. Diaspora communities maintain open channels to U.S. policy makers, often functioning as “sounding boards” providing valuable feedback to decision makers. They are well placed to provide critical guidance, especially during times of crisis, which allows for better understanding on both sides, as well as “networks” which can provide insight into events on the ground.

#### **10. What role do partnerships play in meeting U.S. foreign policy objectives?**

As the proportion of official development assistance represents a comparatively smaller share of the resources flowing into developing countries, governments have to think differently about how to use available resources. Official development assistance from governments and multilateral organizations is no longer the primary driver of economic growth. Foreign investment in developing countries outpaces aid by nearly ten to one. In the 1960s, such aid represented

70 percent of the capital flows going into developing countries. But today, because of private sector growth and increased trade, domestic resources, remittances, and capital flows, that figure is just 13 percent - even as development budgets have continued to increase. Now, we are breaking down silos, barriers and obstacles between the U.S. government, the private sector, the philanthropic community, and NGOs through public-private partnerships. This new era of partnership aligns the interests of our partners with U.S. foreign policy goals in innovative ways.

**11. How can the U.S. government promote investment in countries of heritage?**

The International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA) serves as a platform to help create catalytic investment opportunities in countries of heritage. Under the umbrella of the IdEA partnership, we have launched a few key initiatives, including the Caribbean Idea Marketplace (CIM); the Latino American IdEA Partnership (La Idea); and the African Diaspora Marketplace (ADM).